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ABSTRACT

After defining morale and satisfaction and briefly examining writings on school superintendent job satisfaction and morale, the author describes the School Superintendent Morale Measure (SSMM), an objective measure of superintendent morale and satisfaction. From an initial 148 items and 14 factors included on the basis of presumed ability to measure instances described in the literature as important to the satisfaction and morale of public school superintendents, five factors comprised of 28 items were defined through factor analysis of responses of 195 Indiana and Illinois public school superintendents. The five factors are spirit, relations with the school board, liaison, chain of command, and professional gratification. The factors and their maximum loading and clarity of measurement are included in a chart. (Author/IRT)

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The superintendency, being a highly visible position is subject to scrutiny from as many vantage points as there are vested interests in superintendent success and failure. The superintendent, personally, or epitomized by the office and/or the superintendency team, is seldom excluded from consideration as daily and long term operations are viewed as meeting, exceeding, or not reaching organizational goals.

The superintendency in education is not a dispassionate, non-reactive position held by individuals, themselves neutral and aloof from the stresses and pressures of the position. The intermingling and conflict from what the superintendent encounters and brings to the superintendency as an individual, together with the resulting blurred interdependence of the position and the person, raise a host of fascinating issues to consider. Not the least of these are morale and satisfaction of the superintendency.

Defining Morale and Satisfaction

These two terms, morale and satisfaction, require clarification. They have been used loosely by all; historically and academically the terms have been interchanged and each has been included as aspects of the other. Recently, however, Chase (1976) has drawn attention to the work cycle of educational administrators, in which a sharp distinction between the terms was made, one in which their relationship is made clear. In considering the work of all school administrators, not only superintendents, Chase developed a cycle of five successively interactive elements: motivation, work, achievement, satisfaction and morale. In explaining the dynamics of work, Chase (1976,2) observed these five aspects of work cycle are" ... affected simultaneously by cultural patterns, social structure and personality syndromes--behavior that is influenced by reason and emotion mixed in indeterminate proportions." (see Figure 1.)

For purposes of our interest, the superintendency work cycle is entered at the point of motivation, which:

> springs from interaction between the ready organism (individual or group) and the external situation, and is the trigger which releases energy for work. Work is behavior directed toward organization goals which, when performed under favorable conditions, results in achievement. Achievement in organization terms is the attainment of, or progress toward, goals; but for the

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Figure 1. Work Cycle
(Chase, 1976,1)

> individual in the organization it is the feeling of a task well done or of a substantial contribution to goal attainment ... satisfaction grows out of a sense of achievement and of being valued in the organization. It is a result of past experiences and typically is uppermost in a state of rest between activities. Morale is compound from a commitment to common purposes and a sense of unfulfillment or challenge and is powerfully influenced by the expectation (grounded in past experience) of satisfying future achievement (Chase, 1976,2).

In this framework, satisfaction is a condition of rest, characterized by contentment having a pasttime orientation arising from achievement and rewards, and predisposing to high morale. Morale itself is a condition of readiness for the next challenge, characterized by accumulated energy, having a future-time orientation, arising from satisfaction and expectation of forthcoming challenges and successes, and tending toward the subequent work activity. The two terms are not synonymous. With regard to the superintendency, the satisfaction reflects the degree of contentment with past actions in the organization for which the superintendent had responsibility, real and implied. Morale, on the other hand, expresses the readiness of the individual(s) to accept further challenges of the superintendency.

Contributing Themes

Although little systematic satisfaction and morale research concerning public school superintendents has been conducted, of course, there is literature which deals with the nature of the superintendency. Many textbooks in educational administration devote a chapter to the functions of the superintendency along with

comments upon the problems of the position. Of research done concerning school superintendents relative to this topic, the most inclusive is the report of the status of the superintendency published by the American Association of School Administrators (Knezevitch, 1971).

Four themes about the superintendency appear to contribute heavily to an understanding of satisfaction and morale. (1) With respect to personal and professional security, the superintendency is a risk position. The most common reason reported why the superintendency is vacated for other employment is the attacks, both personal and professional, which superintendents receive in the course of their work (Knezevitch, 1971).

(2) The relation between superintendent and school board also is especially important when considering satisfaction and morale of the superintendency. It has been observed repeatedly that the most important responsibility of a school board is appointing a superintendent and then working efficiently with the individual. Both parties must recognize their proper domains. The school board is a legislative body and the superintendent is its executive agent. How well both parties perform in this relationship has an impact upon the satisfaction and morale of the superintendency.

(3) Public relations or community relations is also an important segment of the superintendency. Some could argue that it is in this task that the superintendency ultimately succeeds or fails. Norton (1971) reported that many superintendents named public or community relations as their most important problem. Maintaining an effective educational program requires an informed community.

(4) Staff relations, especially relationships with teachers, is a challenge every superintendent confronts. With continuing teacher militancy and increasing unionization, the superintendent often finds himself in the position of condemned if he does and attacted if he doesn't, an instance of no apparent satisfaction.

In the course of the superintendency there are many other challenges which though not mentioned, often are related to these four areas. There are almost universal problems encompassing finance, student unrest and societal change as well as numerous minor difficulties which daily confront and absorb the superintendency.

Measuring Morale and Satisfaction

Recently, Erickson and Kline (1975) developed an objective measure of superintendent morale and satisfaction. Entitled the School Superintendent Morale Measure (SSMM), the deivce is a facile and reliable one, developed with the assistance of practicing school superintendents and through the use of factor analysis procedures. From an initial 148 items and 14 factors included on the basis of presumed ability to measure instances described in the literature as important to the satisfaction and morale of public school superintendents, a resulting five factors comprised of 28 items were defined through factor analysis of responses of 195 Indiana and Illinois public school superintendents. The five factors were: (1) Spirit; (2) Relations with School Board; (3) Liaison; (4) Chain of Command; and (5) Professional Gratification. In order to establish reliability, the 28-item, revised form was administered to the identical sample of 195 superintendents, 171 of whom returned usable responses. SSMM was determined to have potential for identifying specific difficulties in morale and satisfaction in the superintendency.

The five factors of SSMM, having been derived scientifically (and mathematically), were assigned labels upon the basis of the content of their items. (See Table 1). Spirit encompasses six items that measured the superintendent's perception of the pride and enthusiasm he and his staff experience in the course of their work. Relations with School Boards, also a six-item factor, assesses the superintendent's perception of his relationship as chief executive officer of the school system with the school board. Liaison, a five-item factor, takes measure of the superintendent's perception of the status of and his effectiveness in inter-communication within the organization. Factor 4, Chain of Command, covers the superintendent's perception of the condition of the organizational structure of the school system. Personal Gratification measures the superintendent's satisfaction derived from being a superintendent and explores the nature of his career aspiration. The stringest items in the SSMM, that is, those with the greatest intensity of superintendent response are as follows:

(1) I am proud to show other superintendents our educational program (830).
(2) Our chain of command has been established carefully (755).
(3) I enjoy being a school administrator (737).
(4) My opinions are considered when important decisions are being made (732).
(5) I find it difficult to communicate with the school board.
(6) In our system, line and staff assignments are understood by my subordinates (670).

Interestingly, public or community relations didnot become a strong factor unto itself, and therefore was deleted from the final version of the instrument as were two other definable, but weak factors centering upon teacher relations and policy making.

Table 1

Morale Factors of the Revised SSMM

Item	Maximum Loading	Clarity of Measurement
Factor 1 - Spirit - Measures the superintendent's perception of the pride and enthusiasm he and his staff experience in the course of their work.		
I am proud to show other superintendents our educational program	0.830	1
I am proud to show other superintendents our facilities	0.616	1
I receive visitors in my office with pride	0.549	1
The actions of my staff are rarely a source of embarrassment to me	0.475	3
My administrative staff can be trusted to do a good job	0.432	1
Our faculty is proud of their school system	0.429	1
Factor 2 - Relations with School Board - Measures the superintendent's perception of his relationship as chief executive officer of the school system with the school board.		
I find it difficult to communicate with the school board	0.670	1
I might as well not make decisions since only our school board has legal authority	0.644	1
Our school board adopts policies which conflict with administrative recommendations	0.542	2

Table 1
(Continued)

Item	Maximum Loading	Clarity of Measurement
Factor 2 - (continued)		
I receive only criticism from the school board	0.533	1
There are few decisions which I can make without first checking with the school board	0.487	2
It is difficult to obtain a commitment from the school board	0.386	3
Factor 3 - Liaison - Measures the superintendent's perception of the status of and his effectiveness in inter-communication within the organization.		
My opinions are considered when important decisions are made	0.732	1
The school board is interested in what I have to say	0.590	1
The school board supports the decisions I make	0.577	1
Communication is open in our organization	0.556	2
Ideas flow easily from one level of administration to another in our system	0.513	2

Table 1
(Continued)

Item	Maximum Loading	Clarity of Measurement
Factor 4 - Chain of Command - Measures the superintendent's perception of the condition of the organizational structure of the school system.		
Our chain of command has been established carefully	0.755	1
In our system, line and staff assignments are understood by my subordinates	0.670	1
The line of authority in our system is clearly defined	0.640	1
The professional staff know to whom they are accountable for their actions	0.631	1
Our chain of command is followed in implementing programs	0.513	3
Factor 5 - Professional Gratification - Measures the superintent's perception of the satisfaction he derives from being a superintendent and explores the nature of his career aspirations.		
I enjoy being a school administrator	0.737	1
I find my work satisfying	0.557	3
I would accept a position in a non-educational organization if the opportunity arose	0.410	3
I would readily move to a university environment if a suitable position were available	0.406	3

Table 1
(Continued)

Item	Maximum Loading	Clarity of Measurement
Factor 5 - (Continued)		
One of the things I like best about my position is the challenge it offers	0.400	1
Being a school superintendent is the goal of my professional career.	0.384	4

. . Those items which filtered through to the final form of the SSMM instrument, however, point to the issues that daily confront the superintendency and contribute to levels satisfaction and morale. Who among you has not been concerned with facilities, actions of the professional staff, or board policies that deviate from administrative recommendations? In dealing with the school board, are you not concerned with school board interest in what you have to say and its support of decision you have made? Does your professional staff know the lines of authority and to whom they are accountable? Thus, the SSMM instrument is a beginning toward the measurement of morale and satisfaction in the superintendency; it obviously is not the ultimate measure of these attitudes. More collaborative research between professor and superintendents reamin to be accomplished.

Indiana - Illinois Comparison

Ericson (1974) used the SSMM instrument and compared Indiana and Illinois superintendents regarding their morale and satisfaction. He determined the SSMM was independent of the type of public school organizational system in which the superintendency was located. No statistically significant differences were disclosed between Indiana and Illinois superintendents for overall or individual factor scores. Several trends were indentified; with one exception, relations with school board, superintendents in Illinois had measurably higher morale than their Indiana counterparts. Possible reasons for this difference are in the realm of speculation.

Ericson (1974) also explored whether the years a superintendent spent in his present position had an influence upon his measured satisfaction and morale. Superintendents with seven and more years in position had higher morale. Ericson concluded that a superintendent who was in position for an extended period of time is likely to have higher satisfaction and morale than one new to his position. This conclusion while reasonable, may be misleading in that the tenure of the superintendency steadily declines beyond six years.

In another vein, this research disclosed origin of the superintendent, e.g., rising within the system or coming to the system from without, had no discernible effect upon satisfaction and morale in the superintendency. Likewise, grade levels included in the school system had no measurable effects.

Differences in morale and satisfaction were disclosed with regard to comparison made on level and recency of academic training of the superintendent, and size of school system administered. Superintendents with master's degrees had the highest satisfaction and morale, followed closely by those holding doctoral degrees. Those having earned the Educational Specialist degree or having acquired advanced certification requirements had notably lower scores.

In all cases superintendents who had completed their academic training twenty or more years ago possessed the highest measured morale. This result coult only be due to those who are satisfied with the superintendency and have remained this long. Superintendents who administered large (3000 and more student average daily attendance) school systems were more prone to have higher satisfaction and morale than those who administered smaller school systems.

Summary

In these remarks you have been provided a framework for viewing the superintendency, its satisfaction and morale. A distinction has been made

between the terms and their relationship established. Further, an objective instrument for the measurement of superintendent satisfaction and morale has been described. Likewise, some recent research on the topic has been placed before you. In releasing the topic to the reactors, permit me to add a final comment by Horace Greeley, "There's no hope for a satisfied man."